

# NOAA Fisheries Service *Pacific Islands Regional Office*

## Overview

The NOAA Fisheries Service **Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO)** manages a wide range of fisheries, protected species, and marine mammals in an area bounded by the Hawaiian Archipelago in the north, American Samoa and U.S. remote island areas in the south, and Guam and the Marianas Archipelago in the west. The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 1.5 million square nautical miles is equal to the total remaining EEZ of the U.S. mainland, including Alaska.

## Regional Office Divisions

**Sustainable Fisheries (SF)** operates primarily under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to administer fisheries, and implements fishery management plans developed by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council. The SF Division maintains the fisheries information system and administers the regional permits program, working closely with the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center to monitor fish catch and effort data, and participates in the Western Pacific Fishery Information Network.

### *Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) Supported*

- Western Pacific Pelagics
- Western Pacific Bottomfish & Seamount Groundfish
- Western Pacific Crustacean
- Western Pacific Precious Coral
- Western Pacific Coral Reef Ecosystem



## Key Management Issues:

- Sea turtle, marine mammal, and seabird interactions in the pelagic longline fishery
- International management of highly migratory species through the new Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
- Pacific-wide Bigeye tuna overfishing
- Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) fisheries in the newly formed NWHI National Monument
- Hawaiian monk seal recovery and response
- Coral reef ecosystems
- Marine debris



**Protected Resources (PR)** operates under the authority of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), and other statutes to protect, enhance, and recover endangered and threatened species of sea turtles, monk seals, cetaceans, and other marine mammals. Commercial fisheries are monitored under the MMPA to ensure that incidental marine mammal take remains at levels sustainable by the affected populations. When necessary, regulations to mitigate the adverse effects of human activities are established.

The PR Division conducts ESA Section 7 consultations to ensure that federally funded, initiated, or permitted projects and activities do not jeopardize a threatened or endangered species or adversely affect designated critical habitat.



*Photo courtesy of Steve Kolinski*

**Habitat Conservation (HC)** is responsible for habitat-related activities in all the island areas in the Pacific. Habitats of concern for fisheries and protected resources include coral reefs, seagrass beds, benthic algae beds, and mangrove forests.

Under authorities provided by the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Water Act, Rivers and Harbors Act, Marine Protection and Sanctuaries Act, and others, the HC Division provides formal comments on public and private activities such as permit applications and construction projects.

The **Fisheries Observer Program** is responsible for debriefing longline observers to document interactions of all protected species, identify and enumerate fish catches and bycatch, and collect various requested life history information. Observer data is used to calculate catch and bycatch rates and produce technical reports, working very closely with the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center.



Mandatory 100% observer coverage is required aboard all Hawaii-based longline vessels targeting swordfish. Twenty percent coverage is the goal for the longline fisheries targeting tunas in Hawaii and American Samoa, as well as for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Bottomfish fishery.

## International Coordination

**International Fisheries** represents the Department of State in activities conducted under the South Pacific Tuna Treaty between the U.S. and 16 Pacific Island countries, as well as in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (the body that implements the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean). The U.S. has signed, but the Senate has not yet ratified, the Convention. PIRO will lead these international efforts working toward sustainable management of tuna and other highly migratory stocks in the central and western Pacific Ocean.

## Facilities

The Pacific Islands Regional Office is located in Honolulu, Hawaii. The growing regional office staff includes representatives in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam, as well as one field office in Pago Pago, American Samoa.

## For More Information Contact:

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